

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 DPW-01 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 AID-20 OMB-01 EB-11 EUR-25 RSR-01 /155 W

----- 044631

R 241141Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6401

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMCONSUL DANANG

CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS VS

SUBJECT: UPPER HOUSE ELECTION: FINAL PRE-ELECTION ASSESSMENT

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUMMARY: WITH THE BALLOTTING JUST TWO DAYS AWAY IN THE UPPER HOUSE CONTEST, THE TWO MAJOR PRO-THIEU SLATES STILL SEEM ASSURED OF VICTORY. THE FOUR COMPETING SLATES HELD THEIR LAST JONT MEETING WITH VOTERS IN SAIGON AUGUST 24. SINCE THE RESULT APPEARS A FORE-GONE CONCLUSION, THE CHIEF QUESTIONS ARE THE SIZE OF THE TURNOUT, THE INTENTIONS OF THE COMMUNISTS ON ELECTION DAY, AND THE DEGREE OF FAIRNESS SHOWN IN THE VOTING. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FOUR SLATES COMPETEING IN THE UPPER HOUSE CAMPAIGN MADE THEIR LAST PUBLIC APPEARANCE PRIOR TO ELECTION DAY AT A JOINT MEETING WITH VOTERS IN SAIGON ON AUGUST 24. EACH SLATE HAD TEN MINUTES TO PRESENT ITS FINAL APPEAL AND FIVE MINUTES TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. THERE WERE NO SURPRISES IN THE PREPARED SPEECHES. THE QUESTIONS WERE OFTEN MILDLY BARBED AND DIRECTED AT PRESUMED WEAKNESSES OF

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THE PARTICULAR SLATE, AS WHEN TRAN VAN LAM WAS ASKED WHETHER THE

RECENT SENEGAL AFFAIR WAS A FAILURE OF GVN FOREIGN POLICY. THE QUESTIONS WERE FIELDING REASONABLY WELL BY ALL SLATES. AUDIENCE REACTION IN THE UNCROWDED AUDITORIUM WAS ONLY MODERATELY SPIRITED.

3. WITH THE CAMPAIGN COMING TO A CLOSE, THE EMBASSY'S FINAL ASSESSMENT FOLLOWS BELOW.

"DEMOCRACY" AND "WHITE ELEPHANT" SLATES STILL FAVORED TO WIN

4. ALL INDICATORS CONTINUE TO POINT TO A VICTORY FOR SLATES NOS. 1 AND 2, THE TWO MAJOR PRO-THEU TICKETS. THE ADMINISTRATION IS OBVIOUSLY DETERMINED TO SEE THEM WIN. REPORTS FROM THE CONGENS AND OTHER SOURCES SHOW THAT DEMOCRACY PARTY AND AT LEAST SOME ADMINISTRATION PERSONNEL CONSIDER THEMSELVES UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO INSURE GOOD PERCENTAGES FOR THE TWO FAVORED SLATES. PROBABLY, THE DESIRED RESULT IS TO HAVE THE "DEMOCRACY" SLATE EMERGE AS THE TOP VOTE-GETTER (AND THUS THE WINNER OF SIXTEEN SEATS) AND THE "WHITE ELEPHANT" SLATE NUMBER TWO, WITH SLATES NOS. 3 AND 4 SPLITTING THE REST OF THE VOTE. WE JUDGE THAT THE FINAL RETURNS WILL REFLECT THIS PATTERN.

5. THE ADMINISTRATION HAS LITTLE TO FEAR FROM SLATES NOS. 3 AND 4 IN ANY CASE. SLATE NO. 3 HAS PUT ON A SURPRISINGLY ACTIVE CAMPAIGN IN SAPZH GKED#A FEW OTHER PLACES, BUT ITS APPEAL IS MODEST COMPARED TO THE KNOWN PERSONALITIES ON THE "DEMOCRACY" TICKET AND THE PRESTIGE OF TRAN VAN LAM, THE "WHITE ELEPHANT" LEADER. SLATE NO. 3 WILL PROBABLY GARNER SOME "PROTEST" VOTES IN THE CAPITAL, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE POOR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS NOW PREVAILING AND THE SLATE'S EMPHASIS OF ECONOMIC ISSUES. HOWEVER, ANY SIZEABLE MOVEMENT ALONG THESE LINES IS UNLIKELY IN THE MOOD OF PUBLIC BOREDOM SURROUNDING THE ELECTION. SLATE NO. 4 WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY COME IN LAST, EVEN THOUGH ITS CAMPAIGNING HAS PICKED UP A BIT IN RECENT WEEKS. THE ONLY BLOC OF VOTES THAT MAY BE IN ITS CAMP ARE THOSE OF DISABLED SOLDIERS, SOME OF WHOM MAY BE ATTRACTED BY ITS COFECTIONS WITH A VETERANS GROUP. AT PRESENT, VETERANS ARE A WEAK AND UNORGANIZED BASE FROM WHICH TO OPERATE POLITICALLY.

TURNOUT THE MAIN QUESTION

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6. REPORTS FROM THE CONGENS STRESS THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO ENSURE A LARGE TURNOUT. IN THE ABSENCE OF A CLOSE CONTEST, THE NUMBER OF VOTERS BECOMES THE ITEM OF PERHAPS GREATEST INTEREST. THE VOTER REGISTRATION TOTAL POSTED LAST JULY WAS FAIRLY IMPRESSIVE (SEE SAIGON A-135), AND A GOOD PERCENTAGE TURNOUT WOULD FURTHER DEMONSTRATE THE GOVERNMENT'S HOLD ON POPULAR ALLEGIANCE, NOT ONLY AGAINST DOMESTIC CRITICS WHO BELITTLE THE ELECTION FOR VARIOUS REASONS BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS FOR WHOM SUCH A

DEMONSTRATION
OF RVN JURISDICTIONAL POWER IS A MAJOR DANGER. BY THE
SAME TOKEN, ANY SIGNIFICANT STAY-AT-HOME MOVEMENTS WOULD BE POINTED
TO BY BOTH THE DOMESTIC POOSITION AND THE COMMUNISTS, FOR
BASICALLY DIFFERENT REASONS, AS DEFEATS FOR THE GOVERNMENT. THE
ADMINISTRATION WILL DO ITS UTMOST TO PREVENT THIS, PROBABLY WITH
SUCCESS IN MOST INSTANCES.

7. AFTER STAYING DORMENT FOR A LONG TIME, THE COMMUNIST SIDE IN
RECENT WEEKS HAS BEEGUN TO REACT SHARPLY TO THE ELECTION. A
VARIETY OF SOURCES DESCRIBE COMMUNIST EFFORTS TO INDUCE VOTERS TO
EITHER SPOIL THEIR BALLOTS OR STAY AT HOME, AND SOME DISRUPTIONS
ON ELECTION DAY ARE THREATENED. THESE REPORTS ARE NOT WHOLLY
CONSISTENT, AND IN MR-3 PARTICULARLY, THE COMMUNISTS SEEM TO BE
TAKING A HANDS-OFF ATTITUDE WITH THEIR PROPAGANDA CALLING THE ELECTION

MEANINGLESS. THE PRG HAS ADOPTED THE PUBLIC LINE THAT THE ELECTION
VIOLATES THE PARIS ACCORDS. THE GVN HAS REBUTTED THIS CONTENTION
SHARPLY, AFFIRMING THE RVN'S RIGHT TO HOLD ELECTIONS UNDER ITS
CONSTITUTION UNLESS AND UNTIL AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED WITH THE PRG
ON SOMETHING ELSE. THIS, IN ESSENCE, IS THE ISSUE BEING JOINED ON
AUGUST 26, AND THE NUMBER OF VOTERS WHO GO TO THE POLLS WILL BE
HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT IN THIS CONTEXT.

MARTIN

NOTE BY OC/T: PARA 5 LINE 3 #AS RECEIVED, WILL BE SERVICED UPON REQUEST

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